

The Iowa Teacher Shortage Loan Forgiveness Program
Report of a Survey of Recipients
Iowa College Student Aid Commission
September 1, 2011

Overview

Iowa College Aid conducted a survey of recipients of Iowa Teacher Shortage Loan Forgiveness Program assistance. Survey results indicate that while the program plays little role in most teachers' initial decision to enter the profession of teaching or to work in an instructional shortage area, the program clearly encourages working teachers to remain in instructional shortage areas and factors in their decision to live and work in Iowa.

Program Background

The Iowa Teacher Shortage Loan Forgiveness Program (ITSLFP) provides Iowa teachers working in instructional shortage areas with assistance in repaying federal Stafford Loans. Iowa College Aid administers the ITSLFP, which Iowa law established in 2007. The Iowa Department of Education designates instructional shortage areas. Fewer than 1% of teachers in Iowa receive ITSLF program assistance. The program is funded by the Iowa General Fund with major additional support from a separate temporary fund. In 2010-11, the ITSLF program provided some \$738,411 in loan repayment assistance to 186 Iowa teachers. The average program award was \$3,970.

*Iowa Teacher Shortage Loan Forgiveness Program
General Fund Appropriations History*

2008	\$485,400
2009	\$478,119
2010	\$438,282
2011	\$421,016
2012	\$392,452

Survey

Iowa College Aid surveyed current and past program award recipients in order to assess whether and in what ways the TSLFP influences teachers' decisions about working in Iowa in instructional shortage areas. The agency sent the survey to 342 current and past recipients of program assistance. Some 131 survey participants (39%) responded.

Summary of Findings

1. Most TSLFP participants who responded to the survey, 55%, became aware of the program after having completed college. A large minority of participants, 42%, learned of the program prior to completing college.
2. A very large majority of respondents (82%) indicated that the program did not influence their decision to major in education. Fifteen percent (15%) of respondents indicated that it did; while comparatively low, this percentage is not negligible.
3. The TSLFP has more of an impact on teachers' choice of subject area in which to specialize. Forty-three percent (43%) of survey respondents indicated that the TSLFP encouraged them to work in a designated teaching shortage area. (It is important to bear in mind districts may assign individual teachers to provide instruction in multiple content areas.)
4. An even greater percentage of respondents—58%—indicated that the program influenced their decision to work in Iowa.
5. Some 83% of survey respondents indicated they plan to continue teaching in a designated teaching shortage area even after their eligibility for program assistance expires.

6. The most common way for participants to learn of the TSLFP is by means of their own web searches; some 30% of survey respondents learned of the program in this way. Another 26% of respondents indicated that they learned of the program from a friend or colleague. Fourteen percent (14%) and 11% of respondents, respectively, learned of the program from an academic advisor or their college's financial aid office.
7. The survey also collected participants' additional commentary on the program. Some 91% of comments relate that the program is beneficial or has provided an incentive. The following comments by survey participants are illustrative:

I would not have ventured outside of my comfort zone if the forgiveness program hadn't been available to give me the boost I needed to try something new. Now I absolutely love what I do and don't see myself moving for many years.

The Program has absolutely impacted my family's decision to stay in Iowa. [...] Losing the Forgiveness program if we move plays a major part in keeping us here!

The loan forgiveness programs in Iowa are the main reason I decided to stay in the state and teach in the shortage area.

I have stayed in Iowa to teach and live because of the ITLFP. I have now decided to stay in Iowa and continue to teach, which was not my original plan after graduating from college. I have realized what a great state Iowa is and I am extremely pleased to have stayed.

Agency Staff
Iowa College Student Aid Commission